whether they are girl-students or whether they are working women; there are, probably, flaws in the scheme just as there are flaws in every scheme, but the point is who is going to monitor that. Should we send somebody from the Central Social Welfare Board down every month to check each person in each hostel?

Cities Upgraded to Status of A-1

*63. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS & EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) number of cities in the country upgraded to the status of the A-1 cities;

(b) the facilities extended to these A-1 cities;

(c) whether Calcutta has received the benefits of mega city plan; and

(d) the difference between the A-1 cities and mega city plan?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) Four Cities in the country, namely Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai have been given the status of "A-1" cities.

(b) Central Government employees working in cities with "A-1" status are entitled to higher rate of House Rent Allowance, City Compensatory Allowances and Transport Allowance.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) The Ministry of Finance (Department of Expenditure), with the limited purpose of grant of House Rent Allowance (HRA), City Compensatory Allowance (CCA) and Transport Allowance to the Central Government employees, classified cities with population above 50 lakhs as "A-1", on the basis of recommendation of Fifth Central Pay Commission. In the case of the Mega City Scheme, five cities *viz.* Calcutta, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore, each having a population of more than 40 lakhs, have been selected for grant of central financial assistance for urban infrastructure development.

SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Sir, as regards class "A-1" cities, it has been mentioned: Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Chennai, and in the case of Mega Cities, it has been mentioned: Calcutta, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

May I know from the hon. Minister on what basis the selection of "A-1" cities has been made? I would like to know whether it is merely dependent on population.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I am afraid there is a slight confusion which requires to be cleared up. The Mega City Scheme is a scheme which has been inaugurated by the Ministry of Urban Affairs in the past. Now this is meant primarily for five cities where the population is four millions or more. Now there we extend some amount of financial assistance in certain fixed proportions for the building up of infrastructure projects and for executing those projects. On the other hand, what you know as "A-1" cities, they never existed before the Fifth Pay Commission Report. The Fifth Pay Commission Report indicated that two cities should become "A-1" and they were only Mumbai and Delhi. Now in the Cabinet we thought of this matter and said that this distinction, which has been historically maintained, which maintained equality between Calcutta, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi should not be departed from and, therefore, overruling the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission we decided that Chennai as well as Calcutta should be classed as "A-1" cities. Now the only result of A-1 status is that certain allowances which are payable to Central Government employees, which in other areas are less, are more, for example, in Calcutta the house rent allowance, the city allowance, the transport allowance are 30% as compared to 15% or less in other areas. So, all that has happened is that now, as a result of the Cabinet decision, A-1 status has been accorded to Calcutta and Chennai and there the Central Government employees will get higher emoluments by way of these perks which are appertinent to their office. On the other hand, the other is a scheme where we have recommended, as a matter of fact, that three more cities should come under that scheme. But unfortunately the budgetary constraints are such. But I must tell you this, and the House

should be taken into confidence, that in the Eighth Plan there was a promised allocation of Rs. 700 crores. But all that was given to the Central Government was Rs. 290 crores. Now, in the present year 1998-99, we have asked for Rs. 100 crores, but we expect Rs. 80 crores are going to be allocated. Therefore, due to budgetary constraints we cannot extend the benefit of the Mega City Scheme to other cities much as we would like to.

SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: My second question is whether I can take it from the answer of the hon. Minister that the upgradation of the mega cities is merely dependent on population. I would like to know whether there is any plan for extending such facilities to other cities of the country.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Yes. I have just indicated that our Ministry would like to extend the scheme to many other cities. But unfortunately there are budgetary constraints. We are asking for more funds. I hope some more funds will become available and with funds becoming available, we will certainly extend this scheme. But it depends on the initiative of the State Governments also. The State Governments must tell us which cities in their opinion claim priority so that we could first extend this scheme primarily to them. But the State Governments must apply their mind to it and, I think, once they do it and make recommendations to us, they will be very seriously and respectfully considered.

SHRI K.M. KHAN: Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the fact that the population of Hyderabad is more than five million. He has said in his reply that Hyderabad is included in the mega cities and certain financial assistance would be given to the employees of Hyderabad city also as that of the employees of other mega cities. I would like to know from the hon. Minister when these benefits will be extended to the employees of Hyderabad city under the Mega City Scheme.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I am afraid there is again some misunderstanding. Hyderabad is already one of the mega cities and whatever benefits are to be given to the mega cities, are being extended to Hyderabad also under the existing scheme. Please don't confuse the mega city with the "A-1" status which has now been accorded to Chennai and Calcutta along with Delhi and Mumbai.

SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether Kanpur is a mega city or not. The population of Kanpur has already exceeded four million. There are absolutely no infrastructure facilities. What are his views in this regard?

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I must admit that when we draw these distinctions, they have to be arbitrary to some extent. If you change the figure from four million to two million, naturally more cities will fall under the mega scheme. But arbitrarily somebody has done it in the past. Still, I don't see any reason for reviewing it unless our budget constraints are removed. If any suggestion comes from anybody, it would be considered very seriously.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Augmenting Employment Opportunities

*64. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps to augment employment opportunities in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) Yes, Sir. A new scheme "Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana" (SJSRY) has been launched on 1-12-1997.

(b) The SJSRY seeks to rationalise all urban poverty initiatives in the country. While providing opportunities for self and wage employment, the scheme gives a special impetus to empowering and uplifting the urban poor women through a special programme titled "Development of Women and Children" (DWAC) under which groups of urban poor women setting up self-employment ventures are eligible for a subsidy of upto 50% of the project cost or Rs. 1,25,000 whichever is less. Special